WENDELL POST

VOL. 1/NO. 10 March 1978 25¢

The Tax Bills Are Out

"I, having been chosen to assess taxes and estimate the value of property for the purpose of taxation for the Town of Wendell for the years ensuing, do swear that I will truly and impartially, according to my best skill and judgment, assess and apportion all such taxes as I may during that time assess; that I will neither overvalue nor undervalue any property subject to taxation, and that I will faithfully perform all duties of said office."

A new era in taxation has arrived in the Town of Wendell. This arrival accompanied the 1977-1978 tax bills Wendell residents received two weeks ago. The introduction of 100% valuation has been met by bewilderment, confusion, anger, suspicion, and the imminent formation of a taxpayers group resolved to find a way out of the dilemma.

The distress has come in large measure from a major shift in the tax burden toward real estate owners. For years the utilities operating in town have paid large personal property taxes. That contribution has been reduced dramatically by the recent reassessment and the real estate owners (homeowners for the most part) make up the difference in the total tax picture. (See Don Stone's analysis on page 8).

(continued on page 3.)

Wendell Assessors listen to public concerns

Pre-School Planned For Wendell Center School

The Wendell Center School is soon to be revived - as a school. Plans are being made to house the Swift River Pre-School program in the now vacant building. The program should start this fall.

An expansion grant received through the Franklin County Head Start Program will fund the project. The money comes originally from the federal Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

cont. on page 5

Quoteable Quote by Wendell Taxpayer

"Reassessment doesn't affect just the individual in the town, it affects the town's future economic relations to the State."

Selectmens Minutes

February 14, 1978

Building Inspector Harold Burnett came to discuss his budget requests with the Board. He indicated no change from last year.

Harold requested a Title change as per State requirement. New title "Inspector of Buildings."

Dump Custodian, Ken Wing, reported that someone has damaged the gates.

The Board received a letter from Mt. Grace Regional Transportation Corp. That Board is looking for two members to their Board of Directors from Wendell.

Police Chief, Ed Chase, met with the Board to review his 1978 Budget requests.

March 14, 1978

Chief of Police, Ed Chase, inquired on procedure to deal with damage to vehicle in line of duty. The Board told him they would let him know next week.

Selectmen stated that they have received several complaints on groups using the Town Hall and leaving doors wide open so that animals can enter, lights and heat being left on when not being used, especially Wednesday nights. They requested that the Clerk send a letter to Kathy Becker, who's in charge of the Wednesday night movies, to please take care of these complaints.

WENDELL POST

Vol. 1 Issue 10

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Please send all manuscripts, photos, letters to:

Wendell Post
Box 113
Wendell, Mass. 01379

or call Annie Diemand at 544-2762

February 21, 1978

The Board reviewed the proposed Fire Department Budget with Fire Chief, Everett Ricketts.

The Chief requested two (2) additional articles for the annual Town Meeting Warrant. One (1) new portable pump, and Two (2) Resusitator Mannekins.

Peggy Simos submitted her name as a Town Representative to the Mt. Grace Transportation District.

Dog Officer, Tom Bardsley, discussed the purchase of a tranquilizer gun with the Board. The Board will give Tom an answer next week.

Voted to purchase a new sink for the Town Hall kitchen from Holyoke Equipment.

The Board will go to Northfield Saturday to interview candidates for the Shared Administrative Assistant with the Towns of New Salem, Northfield and Warwick.

February 28, 1978

Donna Liebl of the Women Works Center of Athol would like to use the Town Hall for a concert on April 30 from 2 to 7 p.m. If it was a nice day they would use the common instead of the hall. Permission would be granted.

The Town Clerk informed the Board of three articles for the Town Meeting Warrant.

ATTENTION: Candidates For Town Election

ATTENTION: Candidates for Town Election

The Wendell Post would like to help you present yourself to the Wendell electorate. We will gladly print interviews and/or written statements from every candidate. We plan to contact each person who has taken out nomination papers and those of blanket nomination. You can help by thinking now about how you want to present yourself in the paper As soon as you are ready contact or phone:

The Wendell Post
P. O. Box 113
Wendell, Ma. 01379

Anne at 544-2762

TAXPAYERS MEETING
TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO
TOWN HALL
SATURDAY APRIL 1st
2:00 PM

(continued from page 1.)

Assessor, Joseph Hartjens, says that the result of the re-evaluation is that "the assessments are now equitable across the board although they need fine tuning in some cases." The measuring stick in the new assessments is a concept called "fair market value". Assessor, Raymond Avery, explained this principle as, "assigning the value we honestly think the property would sell for." However, Rubert Goddard, the third assessor did not sign this years tax warrant "because I don't think the valuation is right. In too many cases they are too high."

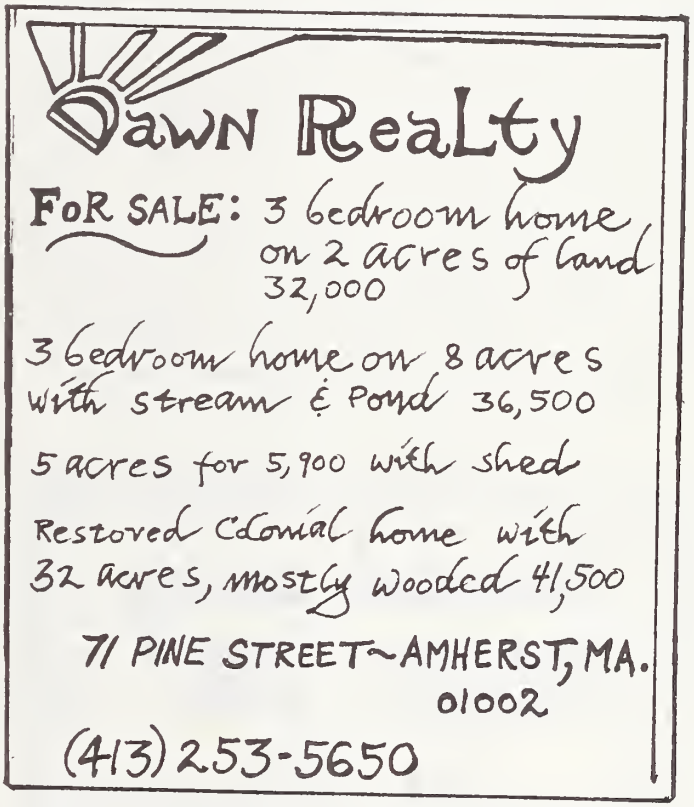
Many other citizens feel the way Goddard does and have contacted the assessors for an abatement application form. Hartjens says, "anyone is welcome to an abatement form and we will discuss it with them, although we can't guarantee satisfaction. Abatements can go either way-up or down." (See box on abatement procedure.)

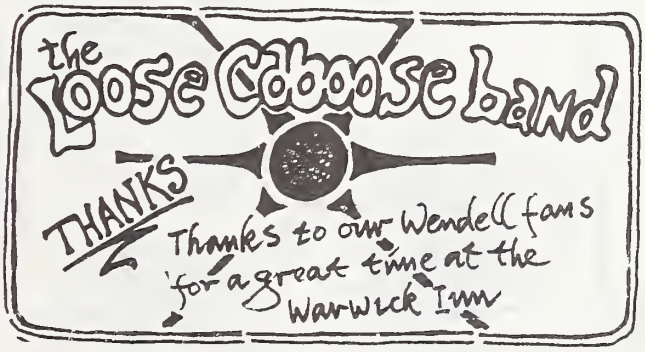
The abatement procedure raises problems in the minds of various people. One, there are limited funds set aside to compensate for abatements. Beyond those funds a deficit is created that would be carried into the budget for next year. Two, while the abatements could resolve some of the inequities among individual taxpayers, it might not deal clearly with the total assessment of the town.

This second problem is important especially in the area of reimbursements from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Ted Lewis, Wendell Selectman, spoke to the Wendell Post of his concern that our higher per capita wealth would adversely affect many reimbursements - roads through schools. Joe Hartjens thought, however, that assessment would be an important factor only in the school budget.

Where is Wendell headed fiscally? Joe Hartjens suggests, as do many others, "we need to look closer at what we get for what we are spending. Not only at annual Town Meetings, but at the specials, too. Because often nearly as much is spent at special Town Meetings, but it doesn't show up as easily." Others feel that the conflict over re-valuation must be resolved first. A group of 40+ citizens came to the assessors' meeting March 18 to express concern and seek solutions to their confusion. (See 'Well Attended Assessors' Meeting' on page 10.) June Lewis and Ted Lewis with others are circulating a petition calling for a new re-valuation. It proposes, also, that until the re-valuation is completed Wendell taxpayers would pay the same amount as their last year's bill.

Ted Lewis says that he would like to avoid going to court or having to hire a professional appraiser. He explains, "that would only cost the town more money." The goal of his petition might be an oversight committee which would monitor a new re-valuation by the assessors and prevent the misunderstandings that came from the first attempt. Rubert Goddard says, "I think if we could present a case and sit down and talk about it without starting an argument or the Board arguing, a lot of it can be worked out."



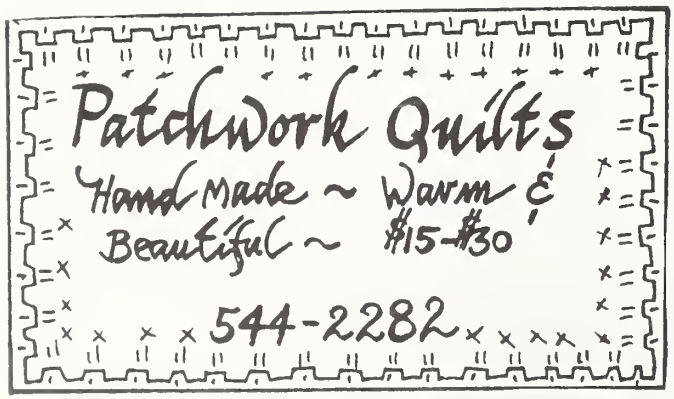


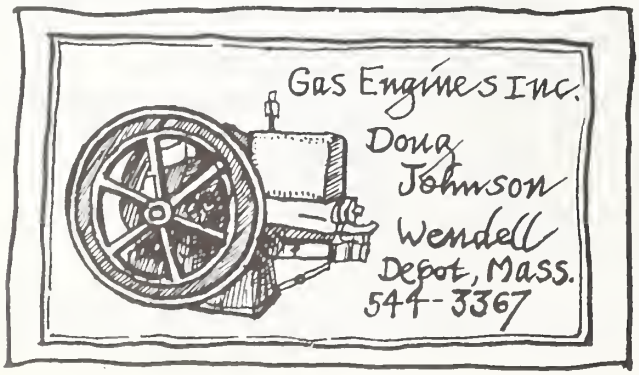
Historical Inventory

An Historical inventory of Franklin County has just gotten underway which will result in a catalogue of all historical landmarks and structures in each of the county's 26 towns by this time next year. Four project field workers will be visiting the towns to compile information for the inventory. Sponsored by the Arts Council of Franklin County, and funded by a grant from CETA, a staff of 8 has been hired to work on the year long project.

The project's outreach worker, Rob Wilson Okun of Leverett, a teacher and writer responsible for publicizing and promoting the project, explained in a recent letter to the Post that "It's not clear when the survey workers will get to Wendell, but early nemtion of the project could conceivably get some locals...into helping the local historical commission." The Wendell Historical Society has all ready been contacted and is eager to be of assistance.

The project would weldome suggestions and help from Wendell residents, wither directly or through the Wendell Historical Society. Inventory Headquarters are on 7 Franklin St. Greenfield in the Arts Council building, the 100 year old former Library Association Building. Telephone 774-3690.





Election 1978

Citizens of Wendell will vote for town officials in May. All nomination papers have been signed and returned to the Town Clerk. Allowing for verification by the Board of Registrars, the electorate can expect a small field of candidates.

There are only four races. Ken Simos is challenging Donald Ellis for his seat on the Select Board. June Lewis is running against Joseph Hartjens for his job as assessor. Judith Putnam will be running against Mary Ellen Easterbrooks for school committee. Scott Hunter is challenging Emma Capeluzzo for the Moderator's job.

The following people will be on the ballot unchallenged:

Marion Herrick - Library Trustee - 3 years,
Christina Cohen - Library Trustee - 1 year,
David Wilder - Board of Health - 3 years,
Charles H. Shaw - Cemetery Com. - 3 years,
Vacant - Cemetery Com.
Raymond Avery - Planning Board - 5 years,
Anna Hartjens - Town Clerk - 3 years,
Margaret Simos - Treasurer - 3 years,
Judith Wilder - Tax Collector - 3 years,
Dolores Williston - Auditor - 1 year,
Daniel Bacigalupo - Tree Warden - 1 year.

How Do You File An Abatement

1. Contact an assessor or the assessors' clerk, Marion Herrick. Ask them to send you an application for abatement of real estate tax.
2. Fill out the form and return it providing specific information that would prove your case for abatement (recent selling price, bills for work or materials, etc.
3. The assessor's should make an appointment with you to review your case and may want to schedule a visit to your property.
4. If you cannot gain satisfaction from the Board of Assessors you may appeal to the State Appellate Tax Board in Boston. (Be forwarned that this may be expensive, take up to a year-there is a backlog of 30,000 cases.)

Why Our Tax Bills Have Gone Up

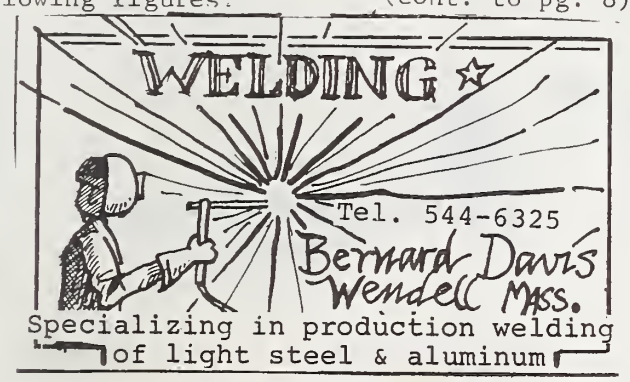
by Don Stone

It is certainly no news that we've all been reassessed and that our tax bills have gone up. It is clear that a number of citizens have received inequitable assessments and that these should be corrected as soon as possible. The idea is that each person's assessment should be about equal to the price for which they could sell their property under normal circumstances. And if you feel your assessed value is more than this, you should certainly file fo an abatement right away.

The assessors have provided a $7,000 tax overlay to provide for anticipated abatements. This translates to a bit under $400,000 worth of assessed value. If the total abatements granted are significantly in excess of this figure, the tax rates for next year will have to be increased both to cover the 1978 tax shortage and because of the decreased total tax base in 1979.

However, it should be recognized that while deserved abatements should most certainly be sought and granted, correction of these inequities does not answer or resolve the problem of "why have all of us been charged higher taxes this year, even though town spending has decreased?" In the following paragraph I will attempt to answer the question "why". But I do not know how to solve the problem. That, it seems, requires a concentrated effort by the town, an effort which cannot be helped by bitterness and bickering over our own individual assessments.

A major effect of the reassessment to "full value" has been a substantial shift of the town's total tax burden from "personal estate" (stock in trade, machinery, and livestock) to "real estate", (privately owned land and buildings). This shift is dramatically shown in the following figures: (cont. to pg. 8)



cont. from page 1

This new pre-school project will serve primarily children and parents from the towns of Wendell and New Salem. Initially the project accomodates 15 children.

An unusual feature of the program is its co-operative link with the Swift River School.

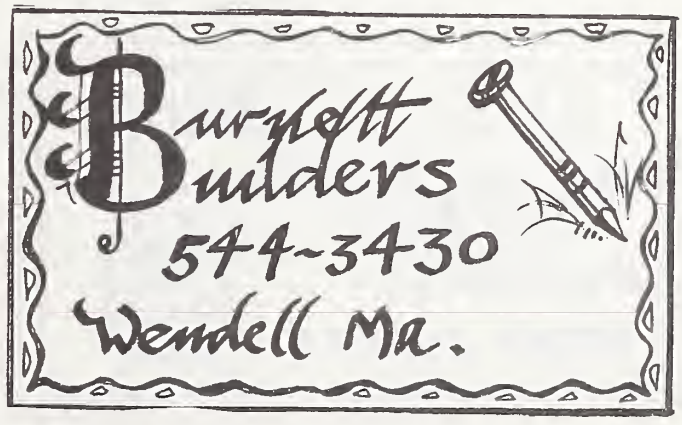
Importantly, the hiring and supervision of the program's staff will be done by both the Swift River staff and the Head Start Office in Turners Falls. Also shared will be chores in the areas of transportation and meals.

Swift River School principal, Len Strauss, says "I am looking forward to this program. I feel it will provide good preparation for the Swift River School, as well as, a good situation for social experience for the town's young children."

"Head Start is a federally funded comprehensive childhood development program, which is defined as such by its legislation," says Mary Anne Sutliff, Franklin County Head Start Director in Turners Falls. She explained further that the program mandates four components. First, the pre-school program must provide education. Secondly, parents are encouraged to be involved. Ms. Sutliff says, "central to the program is helping the parents to be involved with the education of their children and learning their rights and responsibilities of that involvement." The other two components deal with health and social services. The program operates in these areas mainly as an information and referral agent.

Along with money to run the program, $13,000 will be provided to make repairs to the Wendell Center School and its grounds. This work will include painting, fencing, and repairs to the restrooms.

Information and applications may be obtained from Mary Anne Sutliff at 413-774-2318 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. or at 544-7425 after 6 p.m.



A Natural High

Swift River School in New Salem offers a very enjoyable activity on Tuesday nights in its mini gym. Starting at 7:00 p.m., local residents and friends gather to socialize, exercise and interact through the medium of volleyball.

Volleyball is open to both sexes and all ages. When more than two teams (12 people) show up on any given evening round robin is played. Two teams play a game with the winning team playing the waiting third team. The waiting team, should there be one, is at no loss for activity as they are the cheerleaders, coaches, boundary watchers, etc. Of course a trip to the rest room and the water fountain is no less important!

One aspect of the game is the scoring. This being a delicate and important area of the game, it is usually left to the "heavies"- someone of rotund and husky build, loud voice, keen eyes and the appearance of authority to keep the peace, for his word is final.

A brief history of the game is appropriate since volleyball has it's origins so close to home. Volleyball was invented by William J. Morgan of the Holyoke, Ma. YMCA in 1895. Two teams from the Holyoke YMCA demonstrated the game at a conference of YMCA physical directors and the sport quickly developed under their supervision. Rule changes have been made consistently since 1900, resulting in today's present rules. National volleyball championships have been held since 1922 and is an Olympic event.

I do not know how late they play in the Olympics, but at Swift River the game is over at 10:00 p.m. That beer waiting in the frig tastes mighty good, especially with the coming of Spring and warmer evenings.

Maybe you can drop by and join us some evening! A Tuesday Night Player

Lou on the Loose

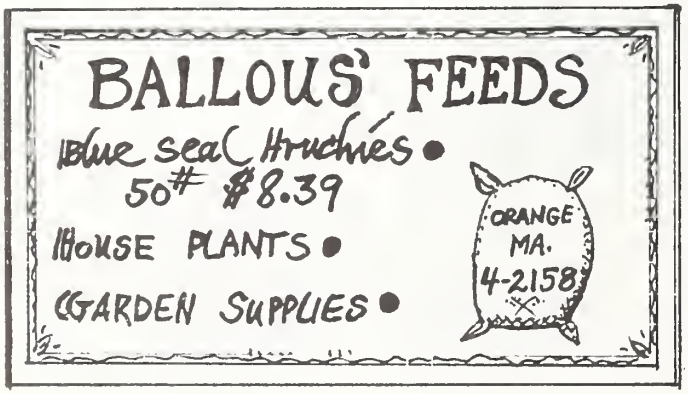
Hello from Lou to you! This is the start of a new column all about Wendell's bands, past, present and future. My idea is to keep Wendell acquainted with its musicians; its musicians with each other, and maybe even mix in a little harmless gossip. From time to time certain bands will be featured, but in most columns I'll be running down what's up with our local (and not-so-local) music scene.

Warwick lives! Yes, the boogie is back on at the Inn. So far, 1978 has seen Fairchild, Loose Caboose, and an Athol group - Fifth Wheel - liven up those old walls and Outer Space is due Saturday, March 25. If you missed any of them, you better start paying attention. Speaking of Outer Space, for those of you who think that they're down for the count, guess again. This Warwick gig (25th) is only a temporary reunion, but something more permanent may be in the wind. Fairchild continue to amaze. Lou caught them recently at Warwick and their WMUA radio concert, and they were cooking! Also, their near capacity crowds at David's in Hadley indicate the Valley might be waking up to the Wendell bands finally.

Remember I said "not so local." Wendell's Magic Music Band has relocated in Florida, changed their line-up, and given themselves a new name: Blue Sky. More next issue.

Loose Caboose, the last resident Wendell outfit, seems to be turning up more often these days. Judging by their recent Warwick gig, this could be the real New Wave. Lou, attempting to stay modest, can only tell you to ask anybody who has seen them. Quite a show! John "Klondike" Koehler, moonlighting occasionally as a sound company (ha-ha), has been hard at work building his new shop on Bear Mountain but still does his usual Klon-size part in keeping Wendell musical. He is headed for New Orleans soon as stage manager at the annual Blues and Jazz fest. Support your local bands! Bye 'til next month.

Lou Caboose



Wendell's Oldest Resident

At the foot of Wendell Mountain in the little village of Wendell Depot lives Annie Burnham, who will be 93 on April 5th. Annie is slight of stature and has snow white hair, with shining blue eyes and a bright lovely smile. She has lived in Wendell Depot for the past fifty years, since she moved here with her husband, the late Ray Burnham. The home they lived in was washed away in the flood, so they bought the house and barn across the road. She still lives in this same house with her daughter, Mrs. Adeline Jefferson. She has no trouble remembering things in the past, but says it's the present things that bother her.

Mrs. Burnham talked at some length about Wendell Depot as it used to be. She remembers the Depot well, even the railroad gate, which used to be wound down by hand to stop the trains. The Dexter House was a thriving hotel. Across the road stood a large building. An eating place was on the lower floor and upstairs was a large hall where dances were held every Saturday night. "Wendell was really alive once," she reminisced, thinking of the dances and all the people who came to them. This hall finally burned down to the ground and that was the end of the dances. But for the men, there was still the barber shop and the pool room to hang out in.

Originally all the mail came to the post office in Wendell Depot and then was sorted out for the Center. All mail was addressed to Wendell, never to Wendell Depot. She remembers as though it were yesterday, the kerosene lamps, the store man who delivered her groceries and even the ice man who came by to fill the ice chest. They were never short of water, for it was carried from an outside well. Pails were lowered down into the well and when filled, were drawn up. This carrying never bothered her, except on wash days, when she'd have to carry a lot more.

Her mother used to tell her that it was the brightest, sunniest Easter Sunday morning in Gardner, Mass. that year of 1885 when she was born. Annie's first marriage was to Albert Morgan and her daughter, Adeline, was only a year and a half, when she was widowed. They lived in South Royalston as Adeline grew up. She later met and married Ray Burnham and moved to Wendell Depot around 1928. He worked for years at the Erving Paper Mill. She worked for Cass' Toy Factory in Athol and the Erving Paper Mill, but the job she liked best was during the war at the Minute Tapioca Plant.

Her health is surprisingly good, except for her hip and legs, which give her trouble and make her very cautious about walking. Her sight is good and she likes to watch certain programs on TV, such as the "Little House on the Prairie" and the "Waltons". She does not approve of some of the programs on TV with the women dancing with little or no clothes on. Her hands are always busy. One of her favorite past times is crocheting potholders. She recently made a braided mat.

Her comment on the dress of people nowadays was "when people used to go somewhere, they always used to dress up, but now they just don't care."

One of the bright spots of her days are the frequent visits from her grandaughter, Gail, who lives in Vermont. She smiled as she said, "Gail is always buying me something." When Gail comes, they go for long rides in the country and even shopping. Annie still enjoys going shopping, especially for clothes.

Congratulations, Annie, from the Wendell Post! May your days be filled with happiness.

Referendum Proposal

Reclassification of property: The legislature has approved a referendum question which will be on the statewide ballot in November, 1978. It would permit classification of all real estate into four categories - residential, commercial, industrial, and wilderness. Equality of evaluation would be maintained within each classification.

The basic idea is to enable communities to assess other types of property more heavily than homes.

From: The Christian Science Monitor
October 14, 1977

Why Our Tax Bills Have Gone Up, cont. from pg. 5

Total Assessed Value	1977	
Personal Estate	$425,454	46 %
Real Estate	497,019	54 %
Total	922,473	100%
	1978	
Personal Estate	$ 841,182	7 %
Real Estate	11,032,454	93 %
Total	11,873,636	100%

Total Town Taxes	1977	
Personal Estate	$130,189	46 %
Real Estate	152,088	54 %
Total	282,277	100%
	1978	
Personal Estate	$ 15,772	93 %
Real Estate	203,847	7 %
Total	219,619	100%

Since over 90% of the 1977 total assessed value of "personal estate" was owned by the electric and telephone companies, this huge shift in the relative assessed values has the effect of shifting a substantial portion of the total 1978 tax load from these big companies to the residents and other property owners of Wendell. In dollar terms, I estimate the effect of the shift to be $85,000, or 39% of the total 1978 tax levy!

This explains why, even though total town taxes have decreased by 22% (from $282,227 to $219,619) all our taxes seem to have increased so substantially. It is no illusion; the total tax on real property--our homes and land--have increased 34% (from $152,088 to $203,847).

It should be noted that the "real estate" owned by the electric and telephone companies has been increased about as much as other properties have, and like many other Wendell taxpayers, they have asked for an abatement. But certainly the total tax paid by these companies has dropped substantially.

It is tempting to claim that this shifting of the tax load is a big inequity, but ironically, under the concept of "full and fair value assessment" the change is more a correction of previous inequity--the electric and telephone companies have been carrying on "inequitably" high shares of total taxes based on relative property values. Still, one can't help but wish that these companies could continue to pay at least the same dollar amount they paid without complaint in 1977.

There has been some concern expressed that the state will also be "making out at the taxpayers expense" by the re-evaluation - this with respect to the amount paid by the state in lieu of taxes on state owned land. Actually the reassessment of town property has very little affect on this figure and town officials expect to collect about the same amount from the state this year as we did last year. This is because neither the assessed value nor the tax rate used by the state is influenced by the town. The state sets its own assessed value every five years (next to be revalued effective in 1980) and bases its rate on the average tax rate of all the towns in the state. As towns are forced to convert to full assessment, this average rate will, of course, fall. But it seems that compelling argument exists for the state to live by its own directives and revalue its 8000 acres of Wendell lands to full value in 1980. This could possibly increase the relative contribution of the state to Wendell's total fiscal needs.

One major state agency and Wendell land holders, the MDC, does pay an inequitably low tax bill, however. With acres of land in their control dedicated to providing water for Boston, the MDC will pay only $42.02 in taxes to the town in 1978! (This is down from the paltry $685.44 they paid in 1977.) At full value ($250 an acre) the MDC tax bill would have been $1931.25. Correction of this inequity would have no affect on our basic tax problem, however.

To reduce the total tax that we as townspeople must pay, we might consider the following actions:

1. Ask the electric and telephone companies to continue to pay taxes at the level they did in 1977. (We have no legal means that I can see of forcing this, but it wouldn't hurt to ask.)

2. Ask the state for some relief due to the hardship caused to resident taxpayers. This could be through an increase in the state's contribution in lieu of taxes.

3. Control town spending - which is at the root of our total tax, and in the final analysis we must and should pay for what we ask to be done on our behalf.

Posting Place

NOTICE: The Post will be publishing a Wendell Tax List of all Wendell real property and assessments. The list will be available for 75¢ at all Wendell Post distribution outlets.

Telephone Tree

Anna Hartjens would like to organize a Telephone Tree for Wendell. This Telephone Tree would be used to help summon townspeople to special town meetings and remind them of other important events.

She would like volunteers to help organize and to serve on the Telephone Tree. If you can help, please call 544-6052.

Old Home Day

There is a committee working on "Old Home Day 1978". The date is tentatively set for July 22nd. We are working on ideas for games and entertainment. Some of the ideas are: a flower show, chicken Bar-b-que, bike parade, arts and crafts, frog race, drawing contest, baby race, people games, raffles, flea markets, fire truck rides, log splitting contest. Any and all ideas are welcome.

Meetings are being held to get the ideas together and to plan Old Home Day. The next meeting will be on April 12th at the fire station at 7:30 p.m. Any ideas for prizes are welcome too. If you have any questions, please call Tom or Gail at 544-2174.

Library Open House

An open house will be held at the library on Saturday, Aptil 1st, at 11:00 a.m. Patrons are invited to meet the trustees and to talk with them about upcoming book purchases. Requests for particular authors, titles, and subjects are welcome. Those who have not visited the library recently are encouraged to come and see what's new. The past few years have seen many exciting changes in the collections, including the newly acquired educational toys and games. The open house is being held in conjunction with National Library Week. Refreshments will be served.

Birthdays

BIRTHDAYS

March 6 Nellie Parson
Parker Putnam - 1 year old

March 19 Penny Ricketts - 18 years old

Social Notes

GIRL SCOUT NEWS

Winter activities for the Girl Scouts were a trip to the New England Aquarium and then off to a colorful Ice Follies show at the Boston Garden.

Anyone who ordered Girl Scout cookies will receive their order during the weeks of May 3 through May 13. Thank you for your support

Well Attended Assesors Meeting

Upwards to sixty-five Wendell property owners ook the opportunity to meet with the Board of ssessors at an open hearing at the Town Hall n Saturday, March 18. The subject was the re- ent reassessed tax burden levied on the res- dents.

The greatest concerns expressed by those pre- ent was with the criteria used by the Board in he reassessment of the Town, as well as with he apparent arbitrariness in some of the assess- ents, property owners questioned why assessments id not factor in such items as:

(1.) the cost of electrification of some dwellings (which would be $8,000-$14,000. in some instances.)
(2.) the location (such as at the end of privately maintained dirt roads.)
(3.) the general condition of the structure.

Assessor Raymond Avery described the assess- ent process as simply assigning the value "we onestly think the property will sell for." oe Hartjens further expanded this to consider he Fair Market value. Ensuing discussion raised uestions of how the Fair Market value could be bjectively defined. The Board could offer no articular or standardized criteria for setting air Market value.

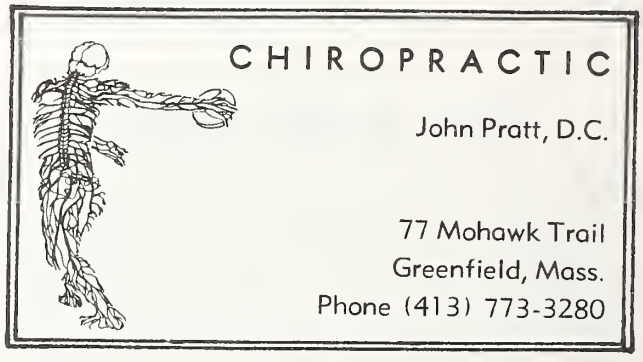
At the meeting the Board was repeatedly asked hy, if the State's Equalized value for Wendell an at around $7.7 million, did the Board reass- ss the town to a value in excess of $11 million t was pointed out that this hurts the town in wo ways. Firstly, since state aid to towns is etermined to some extent on per capita wealth, nflating Wendell's assessment by some forty per ent will decrease the amount of aid the town s elligible to recieve. Secondly, if private eal property is over-assessed, the tax shares f the utilities is correspondingly reduced, lacing the tax burden disproportinately on the esidents. Avery's response was that the ass- ssments were fair and not inflated.

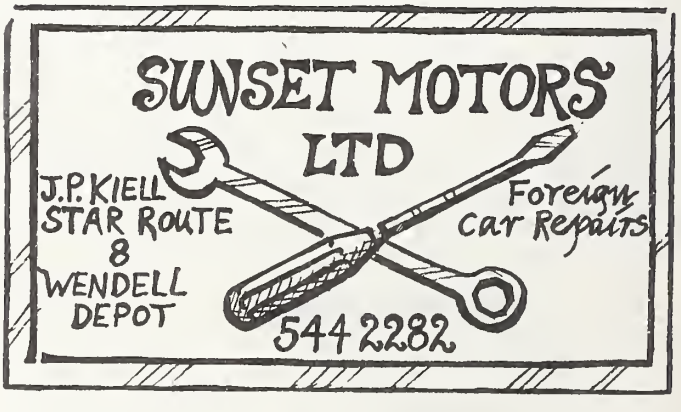
Some properties in town were assessed "blind" that is, no assessor had ever seen the prop- rty, and in some instances were unsure of its ocation.) In this reporter's discussion with artjens and Avery, the assessors defended the lind assessment as a means for gaining access o a property. Avery said, "If we assess a abin at $30,000 the owner'll come over here ad and sign an Abatement application form. Well, we'll find out where he is, and once he signs that paper, we can go anywhere on the property we want."

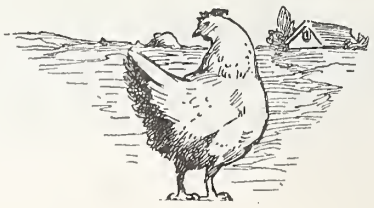
The Assessors allowed that some of the problems with the reassessment were isolated mistakes made by the Board and errors made by a now defunct adding mackine. As Hartjens pointed out, The Board is simply three part-time people faced with an immense task and an immediate deadline. Honest mistakes are bound to occur, which is the reason for the abatement procedure

The problems of 'blind" , incomplete, and inconsistent assessments exposed during the hearing are not the sort of individual oversights which the abatement procedure is designed to handle, which was pointed out by more than one person. Normally, 4 or 5 abatements are processed each year, but already the Board sees the necessity of special meetings to handle the unusually large number of abatement requests.

by Jim Slavas







Opinion

Maybe A Good Sign?

The current tax troubles besetting the town provide us, the citizens of Wendell, with a unique opportunity to work together. To do so, some anger will need to be tempered. Moreover, the productivity of our reaction to the tough new tax picture will have to be carefully measured.

Kept in the right perspective, the petition being circulated by Selectman Lewis and others could provide us with a positive solution to the disputed 1977-1978 tax assessments. Basically, the petition would work the following way:

1. If enough people signed the petition, the Board of Assessors might be convinced that the taxpayers feel the assessors have made a mistake and would like to see it corrected.
2. The Board of Assessors would then inform the town councel of their intention to present the case to the State Corporation of Taxation. There a case would be made for the taxpayers' concerns and a plan presented to resolve them.
3. Taxpayers would be billed the same bill as last year in place of the current one, so that the town would be ensured of enough money to carry its current budget.
4. The Board of Assessors would repeat the re-valuation process with a temporary oversight committee in attendance. This committee would work with the board to achieve a consensus concerning criteria used to make new assessments.

The recent re-valuation was a lot of work. To repeat the process can not be a welcome prospect. While there is understandable distress over the new tax bills, there is a demonstrated willingness to help solve the conflict. The assessors would do well to take advantage of this willingness, while they must be aware of the depth of concern. Likewise, it would pay the Wendell taxpayers to offer their own effort in seeking a solution here, rather than calling on other agencies to exact retribution of our beleaguered Assessor's Board.

When Ted Lewis spoke to the Wendell Post this past Saturday night, he said, "this is the first big problem in my 20 years in public office where the people of the town can work together - and must work together." We should hope that is a good sign.

Message From Post Office

It is illegal to put advertising, political materials, or anything without postage in the Star Route boxes. The carrier is required to pick up those things and bring them in for rating of postage, and the Star Route box holder is the one who has to pay the postage on the materials.

Chicken Pie

1 chicken of about four pounds	3 medium-sized potatoes
1 tablespoonful of flour	1 onion
2 tablespoonfuls of butter	3 cupfuls of stock
	Salt and pepper

Boil the chicken until it is very tender, season, and let stand in the stock overnight. In the morning remove the chicken and cut it up in pieces; there should be about a quart of the cut-up chicken. Blend together in a double boiler the flour and butter and then stir in three cupfuls of the stock. Peel and slice the potatoes and onion very fine. Line the sides of a deep pan or dish with thin pastry, put in half of the potatoes in a layer at the bottom, also a bit of the onion. Stir the chicken into the sauce and place it over the potatoes, then add the remainder of the potatoes and onion until all is used. Put on the crust, which should have a few holes in it to let out the steam, and bake in the oven to an even brown, which should take about twenty minutes.

A Million Dollar Winner - June Lewis

"The things I've always wanted and could never afford aren't all that important, because now that I can really afford them, I find that I really don't want them." Mrs. Lewis was referring to a mink stole she had always longed for, but when she went shopping for one recently in Boston, decided against it. This is what happens when you suddenly come into a million dollars. Perhaps it was the many long years of discipline money-wise that made her hold back.

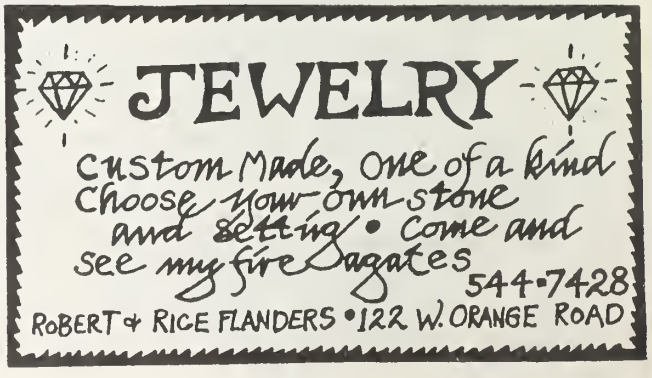
Wendell's million dollar lady greeted us warmly as we called on her for an interview. She told us that both she and her husband have taken tickets on the lottery for some time and had never won anything, so this winning took her by surprise. She still cannot believe it's true. That first evening her sister-in-law heard June's name as one of the ten people to be on TV the following week and congratulated her on winning the thousand dollars. June thought she was kidding, but the next day at work everyone kept congratulating her and she was convinced it must be true. The TV studio had tried calling her, but her son was engaged in a long conversation on the phone and they couldn't get through.

On the evening of February 22nd, June drove to the studio with her three daughters. She was "scared to death". When she won the million dollars, her knees were shaking so much they had to get a chair for her to sit down. And there were pictures and pictures and more pictures taken. It was an evening of such excitement that she and her daughters will never forget.

June explained that she will not receive the entire $50,000 a year. The federal government immediately takes $10,000 right off the top, leaving $40,000 and then at the end of the year the State and federal government take more. She resigned from her position at the Greenfield Dental Assoc. (Always having worked except for periods of having the children, June enjoyed it and helped supplement her husband's income to raise their eight children.) Her husband is still working, no longer because he has to, but because he cannot stand to be idle. However, each dollar he earns puts them into a higher tax bracket. In fact, June's first move was to seek the advice of a tax consultant and that brought her down to earth real quick. To quote June, "at first you're walking on air, thinking money, money, money. But then you calm down. The quickest way to calm down is to go to a tax consultant. When he starts telling you what kind of a tax bracket you're in and what kind of taxes you're going to pay and all those other joyful things that go with it, well, it's not so joyful after all."

When asked how she plans to spend the money June replied, "we've taken a four-day weekend trip to Ohio to visit friends and we plan to go to England next month. We have sent several of the children money to take trips home to visit us, but mostly we're just banking it. We don't want to make any rash decisions and blow it."

June was born in New Haven, Conn. and met her husband, Ralph, when he was serving in the U. S. Navy at a submarine base in New London. They have been married 31 years in June and have five daughters and three sons.

Mr. and Mrs. Lewis moved to Wendell nine years ago. June is interested in town affairs especially the recent re-evaluation by the Board of Assessors. She is disturbed over the latest tax assessments as were so many of the local taxpayers when they received their tax bills last week. She cited one very tiny place on the main road that the valuation was set at $10,000. She feels so deeply about the situation, that she has decided to put her name on the ballot running for assessor in the upcoming election on May 1st. She hopes, if elected, she can help in bringing about a fairer assessment to the people of Wendell.

Referring again to her windfall, she said, "People have been pretty wonderful. Lots and lots have called to wish us well and they're just so glad that someone around here has won